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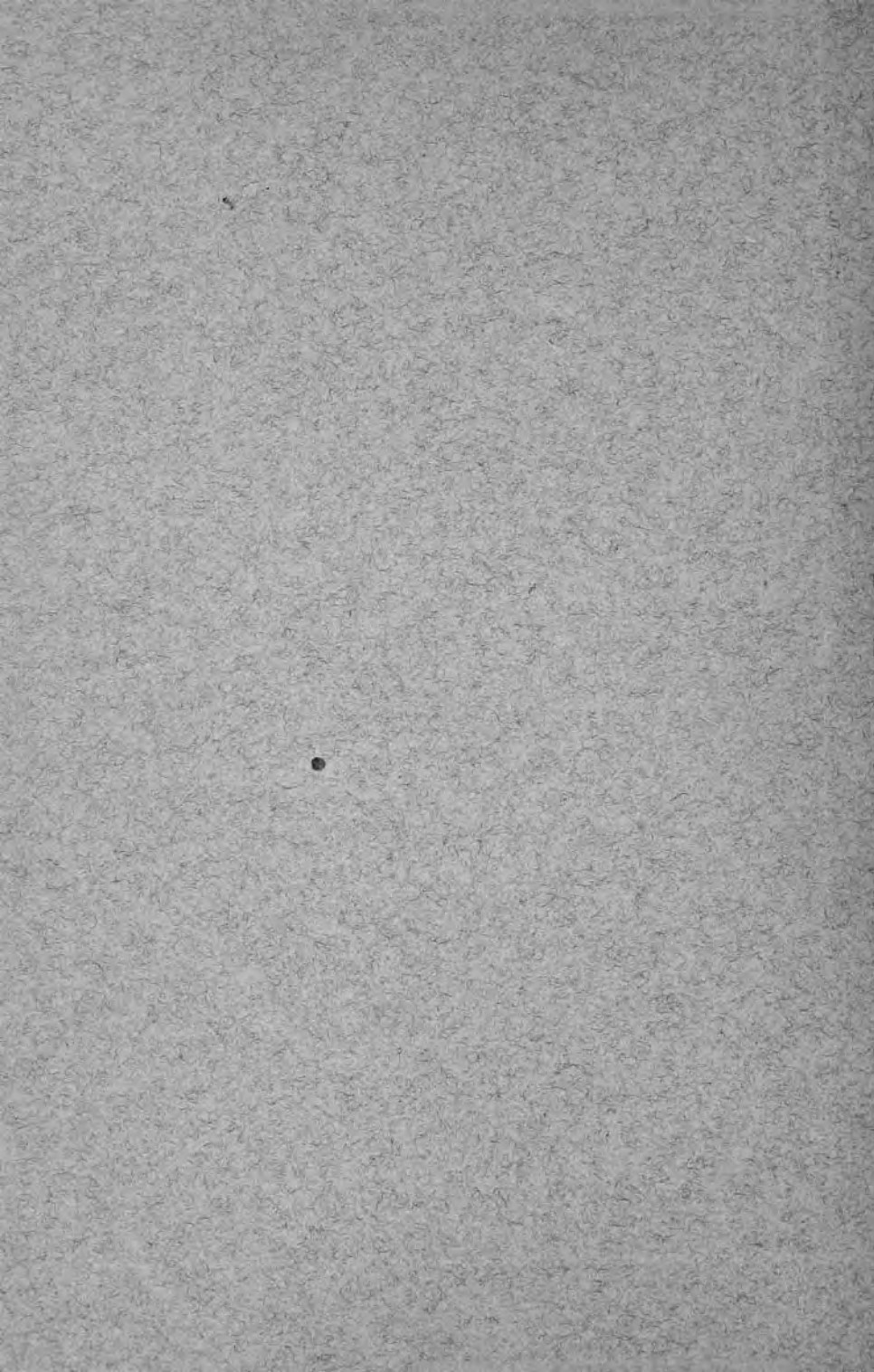
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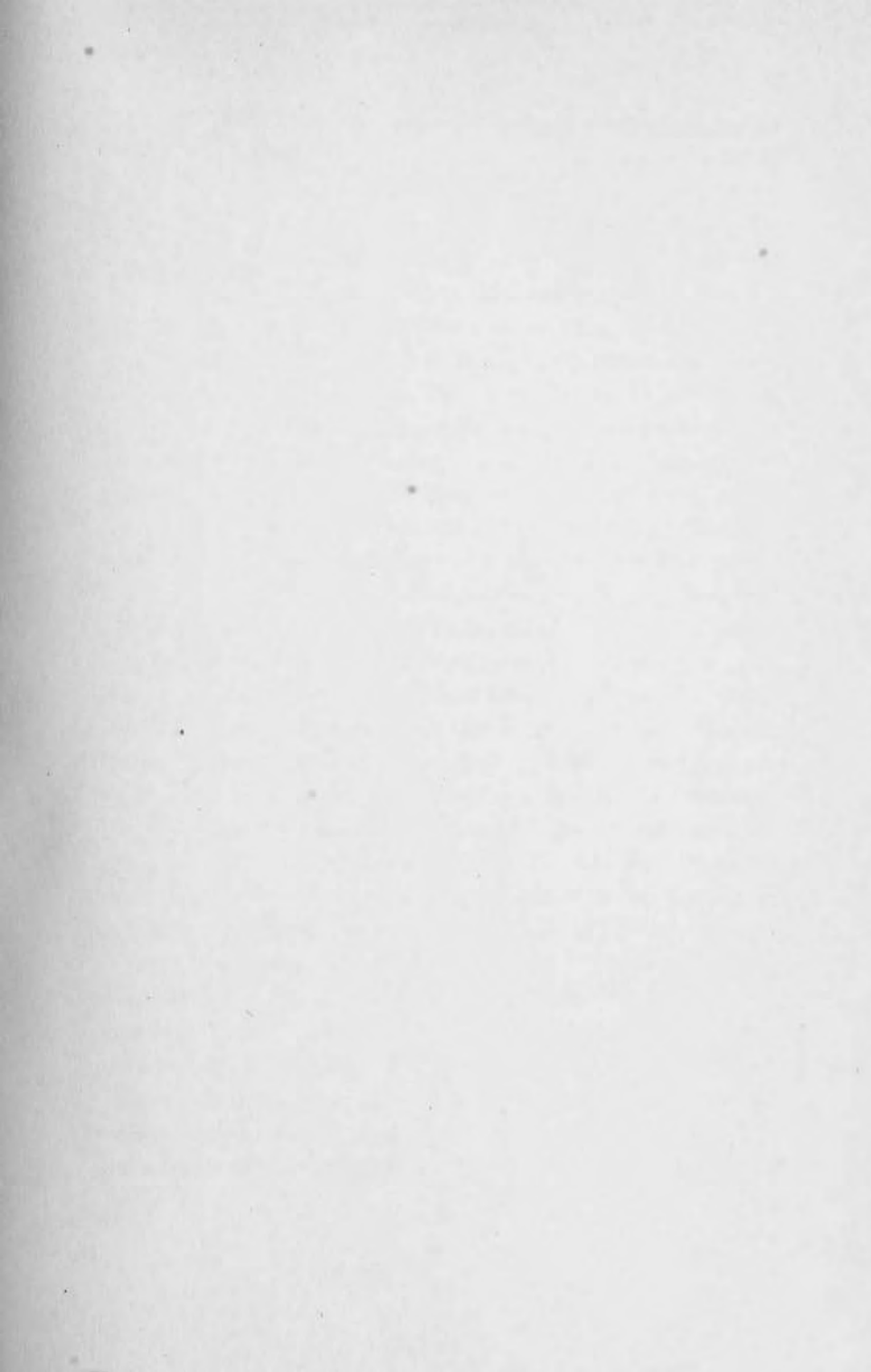
NUMBER E

COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS  
OF  
JACOB GOULD SCHURMAN  
PRESIDENT OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY  
TO THE GRADUATING CLASSES

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 1914

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WHEN the members of these graduating classes have grown somewhat older, when they begin to indulge in retrospect, when they recall with pride in alumni gatherings, always delightful and sometimes hilarious, the exploits of their undergraduate days, they are likely to signalize the year 1913-14 as an *annus mirabilis* for their Alma Mater. And if "student activities" be regarded apart from "studious activities" (which, however, are the supreme end and object of the University) a good case can be made for the claim to pre-eminence on behalf of the year we are now just closing. It has certainly been a year of famous intercollegiate athletic victories—victories on land and sea and in all the major sports and games. And the graduates now before me are likely to remember these triumphs in contests with their friends in other universities long after they have forgotten the lessons they learned in the classroom and laboratory.

You will therefore not think it unnatural or inappropriate that on this culminating day of days the President of the University should have something to say of the congenial subject of Athletics with which during the year your minds have so often been filled, your enthusiasm so deeply stirred, and your loyalty and pride so exultantly satisfied. Not indeed that I would presume to discuss the rules of the games or the best methods of training sportsmen. These are matters which seem to be thoroughly understood at Cornell; at least the year's record is a certificate of satisfactory proficiency! And for my own part I am willing in the future as in the past to leave them to our admirable Faculty, Alumni, and Student management and to the unsurpassed Teachers whom that system has developed.

But I cannot look back upon the year's athletic victories and forward to your future without recalling, now as the one chapter is closing and the other is about to open, that the life on which

you are so soon to enter is a race. The dearest ambition of every one of you is to achieve success. My exhortation to you is that which was given long ago by the Apostle Paul to his disciples at Corinth, who, you will recall, lived close beside the scene of the Isthmian Games : *So run, that ye may obtain.*

#### CONDITIONS OF SUCCESS

In life as in games success depends on the fulfilment of prescribed conditions. The athlete must keep the body under, he must be temperate in all things, he must practice the activities of the art until they have become a second nature, he must be amenable to instruction and inexorable in self-discipline, he must be quick and ready and resourceful and self-reliant, he must learn to endure hardness—both to spurt and to stand a long and heavy strain, putting every ounce of his energy into his job—and in most cases he must combine individual initiative with the habit of co-operation so as to produce effective team-work, thus subordinating personal ambition to the common good. Some, perhaps all, of these qualities are the result of training, but there must be native endowments to begin with. And as people are variously endowed with natural gifts some make better athletes than others. “ Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize ? ”

#### LIFE AS A CONTEST

Life too is a contest with its own set of rules and conditions. The great Master of life has prescribed its laws, which we mortals learn by experience. Education on the one hand furnishes those who enjoy it with a compendium of the experience of the race. And education on the other hand trains the faculties of the student for the performance of his work in life. What he has done at the University the student continues to do in new fields after he has graduated. Education is a gymnastic of the mind, as athletic training is a gymnastic of the

body, and both are a school of preparation for practical life. True, the educated man may prove a failure in business or in a profession, but his want of success is in spite of his education, not in consequence of it. Some talents were requisite for achievement which the unsuccessful man did not possess; the training of the powers which he actually had saved him from a greater failure.

Thus athletic training leads us naturally to intellectual training, to moral training, and to the practical conduct of life. The rules are applied in different spheres and to different problems, but the conditions of successful achievement are substantially the same in all. Let us attempt to formulate the more important of them in terms of that practical life for which you have been preparing yourselves and to which you to-day go forth.

#### PHYSICAL FITNESS AS A CONDITION OF SUCCESS

I place first physical fitness, which is the object and the justification of all our games and sports. A sound body is nature's greatest boon to any human being. And nature is more generous with her bounty than young men and women are careful in safeguarding it. There has, however, been a wonderful awakening of interest in the subject during the last two or three decades. College athletics is the expression of that interest, and the importance of the object goes far to condone, if it does not justify, the abuses of intercollegiate athletics. We want a generation of strong, healthy, capable, and efficient young men and women. There is no goodlier sight in all the world. And the demands of the new age cannot be met by weaklings. I speak not of such extreme cases as the activities of the militant suffragettes! Yet the endowment of women with the suffrage, which is bound to come, will certainly make new demands upon their energies, as the opening up to them of new vocations has already done. And the vastness and complexity of modern business, the gigantic operations it performs, call for young men of unusual nerve and



stamina and power of endurance. The managers of these titanic establishments insist upon physical fitness as a prime requisite in their employees. And following the example of the successful athletic coach—Mr. Courtney, for instance—they are coming to prescribe total abstinence from alcohol and tobacco as an essential condition of the highest physical vitality and efficiency.

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC HEALTH

The public too are awakening to the importance of good health and physical vitality for all classes of our citizens. Much of the regulative legislation of our age has had for its object the safeguarding of the health of our industrial workers. The aim has been to make the factories in which they labor and the houses in which they and their families live sanitary and decent. In this just and righteous process of reform the property rights of individuals must yield to the police power of the State exercised in the protection of the health, safety, morals, and welfare of the community. No talk about interference with the property rights of individuals or corporations can or should stop this beneficent legislation for the physical and moral well-being of the community, and especially of the industrial classes whose good health and physical efficiency are their only working capital.

#### HARD WORK AS A SECOND CONDITION OF SUCCESS

After physical fitness I name as a second condition of success in life the habit of whole-souled application to the work you have undertaken. "Genius," says Carlyle, "is an infinite capacity of taking pains." You must give yourself unreservedly to your job. No man can serve two masters. Find your place in the great system of the world's workers, and go at your work with all your might.

Here again the analogy both of physical and mental gymnastics is instructive. In both the secret of success is intense concentration and continuous application. Look at the youth of eighteen,



who wants, as he almost tremblingly says, to make the Varsity crew or team. What is the course of preparation? Why, if the experts think him a youth of athletic endowments and promise they set him to work. If, for example, he is a candidate for the crew, he must row either at a machine or in a boat day after day while his arms ache and his muscles are weary and his whole system seems on the verge of exhaustion and collapse. The object of the coach is to make the youth over again—to transform him from a landsman into a rowing automaton. And with hard discipline and long practice this result is at length achieved. In time the youth comes to think of the boat as a part of his personal equipment and the oar as another member of his bodily organism. Rowing becomes as natural and within certain limits as easy as any other bodily function. The youth finds himself in possession of a second nature, which hard work and training have created for him.

Or look again at the freshman who comes to the University with an eager thirst for knowledge and is fired with ambition to become a great scholar or a great scientist. Even in these days in which many young men "are sent" to college by ambitious parents, there are still large numbers who come to gratify their own inherent desire to know and understand the facts and laws of life and of the world in which they move and have their being. These young men are certain to distinguish themselves by their intellectual achievements. How do they win success? The answer is the same as in the athletic field. Knowledge too is won by devoted effort, by incessant application, by attention so intense and concentrated that the student in his best hours becomes unconscious of everything but the ideas with which he wrestles and the new truth he extracts from their shrinking and elusive play. A member of this Faculty, a neighbor of mine, for many years began these intense studies at four o'clock in the morning. That is the way in which he had worked from the day when forty-four years ago he entered this University as a fresh-

man. Is it any wonder he has made himself the foremost American in his field of science? To-day he retires from the teaching staff to devote himself exclusively to research. You will all, I am sure, join me in the earnest wish that our University may long enjoy the presence and share the renown of Professor John Henry Comstock !

In the practical life to which you now go you will find also that success is to be won only as the result of hard effort and unremitting toil. A "pull" may give a young man a start, but in this age of efficient organization it cannot secure him promotion or even permanently hold his place. Whether it is farming or engineering, law or medicine, business or finance, the demand is for young men of capacity, of knowledge, and of industry. You must work with all your might or you will not succeed. And in practical life, as in study or athletics, the law of habit gradually makes a second nature of what you do at first with difficulty. Your energy may then be released for new directions. But energy will always be necessary. Neither through life, nor to Heaven, is one carried on flowery beds of ease.

The college graduate has one advantage over every other youth, if he has really acquired in his college course the great art of mental application and concentration. I have sometimes said that the love of good books is the supreme end of a college course. And I will not gainsay that to-day. But looking at the matter from another point of view it may with equal truth be said that the object of a college training is to teach us to use our mental powers. The man who can throw himself on an intellectual problem with all the powers of his mind, who can wrestle with it as a rower tugs at his oar, who can spurt or take a long and steady pull as the conditions of the problem may demand, the man in a word who has gained full control of all his faculties, has achieved the chief attainment which a college education can bestow. And that is why the extra-curriculum

interests of the students can never be a substitute or equivalent for the mental training of the classroom. There is a vast difference between "student activities" and "studious activities." And the advantages I am claiming for the college man can be claimed only for those who have given themselves up to "studious activities."

#### EDUCATION AS A THIRD CONDITION OF SUCCESS

I have spoken of physical fitness and of whole-souled application to one's appointed task as conditions of success alike in athletic contests, in intellectual pursuits, and in the practical affairs of life. So far as an education fulfils the ideal of developing a well-trained body and mind it prepares youth directly for success in life. To that end, however, there is a third requirement, which a youth can secure nowhere else except at a college and especially at a university. I refer to the knowledge or science on which so many of the industries and vocations of the modern world are based. It has been the peculiar characteristic of Cornell University to prepare young men, and young women too, for the diversified pursuits and callings of the modern world. One after another of these vocations has found its way into our courses of instruction, and all of them meet demands which the age is properly making upon our universities. Emphasis and popularity shift with changing economic and intellectual conditions. One or two decades ago there was a rush to courses in engineering; to-day, all over the United States, agricultural colleges are becoming formidable rivals of engineering colleges. Meanwhile the older professions raise their standards and continue to attract a sufficiency of students to meet the demands of the public. Thus in friendly rivalry law and medicine, the fine arts and the practical arts, agriculture and commerce, manufacturing and transportation, all are domiciled in the modern University and all demand the aid of science for the successful prosecution of their tasks.

It is, I repeat, an enormous advantage which the youth enjoys who secures this professional, technical, or vocational training. He has something which his uneducated neighbor can never possess. And, in consequence of this advantage, the graduates of our universities are likely more and more as time goes on to become the leaders of the country's affairs and industries. But if they do, it will only be because they recognize the just limitations of the advantage I have described. Knowledge and science are of great importance in modern life, but a man may be learned or scientific and yet prove a failure in his vocation or business.

#### NEED OF PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE ALSO

This brings me to a danger to which college graduates are especially exposed. Because they are conversant with the laws and principles underlying the pursuits and industries to which they devote themselves, they easily imagine that they have little or nothing else to learn. "They know it all!" Who has not heard college graduates ridiculed for their conceit? We are often told that in consequence of it they are good for nothing for a year or two after graduation. And business men will tell you with gusto how they have clipped the wings of these high-soaring fledglings!

I think it was the great philosopher Spinoza who said that the two greatest banes of humanity were self-conceit and the laziness coming from self-conceit. We are all prone to think well of ourselves. And fresh college graduates, who have not been chastened and humbled in the struggle for life, and who have enjoyed for four years in academic seclusion the best things which the world can offer to any human being, may have an undue sense, not indeed of the opportunities that have come to them, but of the personal pre-eminence which they fondly believe has resulted from those opportunities. The lesson they have still to learn is that every profession, every calling, every business has its own method, its own procedure, its own body of

practice, and that the college graduate is as ignorant of all that as the boy in the streets whose only education has been the three R's. He is as ignorant of it as the freshman is ignorant of mechanics or the beginner of rowing. And the same course of discipline is as necessary in the one case as in the other. The discipline of the athletic field and of the University you have undergone. Well, you have still to undergo the discipline of your vocation. And it is as essential in this sphere as in the others that you should manifest a teachable spirit and be constantly permeated with the sense of your own vast ignorance in the presence of the new world of practice which your vocation is opening up to you.

You are right in thinking your scholarship or science a real and important advantage even in the matter of making a livelihood. I repeat that in the modern world whose affairs are based so largely on scientific knowledge, it is an almost essential condition of success. But you must recognize its limitations and not expect it to take the place of other conditions. One of those other conditions is the practical discipline of your profession and business, and that is something to be acquired by the same method and in the same teachable spirit as you have seen exhibited in this University in the training of athletes or scholars. You go to a new teacher in a new field, but you carry your old ignorance with you.

#### THE SOCIAL CONSCIENCE A FOURTH CONDITION OF SUCCESS

With the Greek games in mind the Apostle Paul writing to the Corinthians described life as a race or athletic contest. The games of the Greeks were mainly contests of individual against individual—running, wrestling, throwing the discus, etc. But modern athletics like modern industry and modern life have become socialized. In our major sports—in football, baseball, and rowing—it is not the individual but the crew or team which forms the unit. The social spirit controls the individual's

ambition and the individual's caprice. Every member of the crew or team is a member of an organization. And his first duty is to fill well the place which has been assigned to him in that organization. In the successful crew or team the consciousness and functions of the individual are merged in the activities of the group. Co-ordination and co-operation are the essential conditions of success.

The same law holds in the conduct of that practical life on which you are now about to enter. If, as I have said, physical fitness and intense application and knowledge and science are conditions of success in life, so I must now add as a fourth requirement the social conscience which makes a man a loyal, helpful, and trustworthy member of the community in which he lives and works.

Not indeed that the individual should abnegate his own free personality. For a man's own soul is the one thing of infinite worth in the world. But human beings are knit together in the bonds of society. And the whole fabric of the modern economic system is one of organization, co-ordination, and co-operation. It is, indeed, not so completely socialized as an athletic team or crew; and, in view of the different objects pursued, it is safe to predict that it never can be so completely socialized. Yet every thoughtful person who has followed the tendency of the times must recognize the truth of Tennyson's description:

"The individual withers and the world is more and more."

I repeat, the community does not yet regard itself as knit together like a crew or team. But it no longer feels itself a collection of struggling, jostling, and mutually repellent atoms. It is gradually getting socialized. And the young man who would succeed in life must be one who recognizes his obligations to the community, who identifies his own interests with those obligations, and who may be depended on to work for the common good. Whether the community he serves be a State or a factory or a farm, it matters not: the important thing is not



the size of the enterprise but the spirit of loyal service and devotion he puts into it.

*Ladies and gentlemen of the Graduating Classes :*

If what I have been saying is correct—and I think it is—I may draw a conclusion of great encouragement for every one of you. The life you are about to enter is indeed a race ; but it is a race in which not merely one, but every one, may win the prize. For each of you is called on to serve the community ; and if, like the members of the crew or team, you each play your part well, you will have won the only prize that is open to you. If the life of man were a mere struggle for each one to get his head above everyboy else, then of course the only victor would be the financial magnate, the political potentate, or the gourmand or insatiate sensualist. But if life really means faithful service in and for the community—as religion and reflection agree in declaring—then all honest work, all loyal effort, brings its own reward :

“ Act well your part,  
There all the honor lies.”

If life is a game, it is a rivalry in generous service to the community of which we are all members. College graduates because of their superior education should be able to render better service than others. The public have a right to expect it of us. My dearest hope, my most earnest prayer, for each and all of you is that you may rise to the height of your opportunities and win the noblest prize open to human beings—the crown of high character, of intellectual attainment, and of loyal service to your day and generation !





A limited number of copies of the foregoing address may be secured on application to the Secretary of Cornell University, Ithaca, N. Y.